

SHEETS *and* PILLOWCASES

selection, use, and care



Evelyn Stout

Cornell Extension Bulletin 93I

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PART I. SELECTION OF SHEETS AND PILLOWCASES

So you are interested in choosing sheets for yourself, your family, or as a gift! If you are buying sheets for the first time, or if you have not bought sheets in several years, you may be surprised at what the market offers you. Sheets are no longer routine household fabrics. They have now become fashion items, as you will see if you look at the ads in your magazines and newspapers. You may find yourself bewildered by the great variety of fibers, sizes, qualities, colors, decorative features, and styles. This bulletin is designed to give the information you need to make a wise purchase.

What about price?

Perhaps the first question homemakers ask is about price. Prices of sheets vary almost as widely as their types. You can spend from two to ten dollars—or more—for the standard types and sizes offered in your local store. A candy-striped percale set which includes one double-bed sheet and two pillowcases is priced at \$16.95 on the retail market. Then there are the more exotic sheets, such as monogrammed linen, hand-embroidered linen or silk, and even black satin, which cost a great deal more, and which must be specially ordered. A Washington socialite hostess a few years ago had perhaps the costliest sheets on record. She is reported to have paid \$4000 each for the pink silk sheets which she used on her bed!

But most people prefer ordinary styles and sizes in white and unbleached cotton muslin and percale sheets, which are called "staple" sheets or "domestic staple" goods. Regular sizes in staple cotton sheets are the least expensive offered. The price increases with the use of other fibers, colors, various types of decorative detail, and extra large sizes.

You need to decide what features you consider essential, and what you can afford to pay; then choose from the variety offered in that price range.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: The author is indebted to Beulah Blackmore for information contained in two of her Cornell Extension bulletins, now out of print.

What varieties are offered on the retail market?

Muslin and percale cotton sheets in different qualities and sizes are offered in nearly all department stores, in mail order houses, and in some general stores. In September, 1953, the first woven nylon sheets appeared on the market. Within a few months, nylon tricot-knit sheets made their debut. Since then, manufacturers are offering or preparing to offer sheets of nylon-acetate and nylon-cotton blends. Before long, sheets made of Orlon or Dacron, or of other fibers blended with Orlon and Dacron, may be offered. Linen sheets can still be purchased in some stores, and can be ordered through many more. They are not very popular in the United States because they are expensive, wrinkle badly, and feel somewhat clammy in cold or damp weather. They are much used in Europe, however.

A rainbow of plain-colored and decorated sheets further increases your choice. You may buy white or colored sheets with hemstitched hems; white sheets with white or colored-scalloped hems; colored sheets with white-scalloped hems; white sheets with color-piped hems; colored sheets with white piping; white sheets with plain-colored, figured, striped, checked, or plaid hems; plain color with checked, plaid, figured, or striped hems; all-over striped, plaid, checked, or figured sheets—the variety is endless. Patterns may be either printed on or woven in.

Many of the decorative sheets are sold only in boxed sets with one or two sheets and matching pillowcases; but sometimes you can buy them as you buy other sheets. The boxed sets make very attractive gifts. You may even find matched sheet and towel sets in your favorite store.

Sheets are available in regular flat styles, or with mitered-stitched corners. The latter are called "fitted" or "contour" sheets. You can buy contour sheets mitered at all four corners to fit snugly on the mattress for use as bottom sheets. Contour-style upper sheets are mitered at the lower corners only, and have extra fullness at the bottom for "foot room."

Even Baby is catered to in the sheet department. Crib sheets are available in the various types of flat and contour sheets, of woven or knitted construction, and in a range of colorful and decorative styles. Knitted contour crib sheets are very soft and stay in place well. Most crib sheets are made of cotton, but a few nylon ones are being offered.

You can buy electric sheets too! They are like electric blankets except that they have a cover of sheeting over the wires rather than napped blanket cloth. Electric sheets are less expensive than electric blankets.

Sheets have even forsaken their traditional function. Nowadays you will find many of the decorative and colored sheets being used as bedspreads, draperies, curtains, dressing table skirts, and so on.

Few, if any, stores are able to carry a complete inventory of the many different types, sizes, colors, and styles in sheets. But in the large cities, by shopping among the stores, you should be able to locate any type or color you want.

What does the label tell you?

The labels on the sheets you examine may mean much or little as buying aids. In some instances only a brand name and sheet size (length and width) are given. If you have had no experience with that particular brand, the label is of little help. Sometimes very complete information is given. Labels may contain data on torn size, thread count, breaking strength, weight, shrinkage, quality ratings such as "first," "seconds," "irregulars," or "run-of-the-mill," denier, and gauge.

What do these terms mean?

No one of the above terms, used alone, tells you much. But several together can tell you quite a lot about the sheets you are examining. They can be important indications of the serviceability you may expect.

"*Torn size*" refers to the size of the sheet before hemming and the way in which it was removed from the bolt of sheeting. Since the sheet size on flat sheets always refers to the unhemmed size, the finished length will be reduced by the amount turned under and in for hems. Hem sizes vary in different brands of sheets.

Sheeting is torn from the bolt on a straight (crosswise) yarn from selvage to selvage; therefore the ends will always be straight when properly washed, ironed, and folded. Sheets that do not specify "torn" size were probably cut from the bolt. They are often cut off-grain, and their ends will never be straight after they are washed, ironed, and folded.

"*Thread count*" refers to the number of yarns per inch in the lengthwise (warp) and crosswise (filling) directions. The number of warpwise yarns is usually given first. When the two numbers are the same, the count may be described as "square." For example, "72 x 64" means 72 warp yarns and 64 filling yarns per inch, while "200 square" means 100 yarns per inch both ways. The more nearly the count is "balanced," that is, the nearer it is to being the same in both directions, the better the service that you may expect, other things being equal.

If thread count is not given, you may judge the "balance" to some extent by observing whether the yarns seem to be the same size and the spaces between yarns the same size in both directions. Hold a single thickness of sheet up to a window or to the light so the weave is silhouetted. You can judge the yarn evenness and spacing better this way than if you look at it on the counter.

"Breaking strength" (warp and filling) refers to the pull, in actual pounds, which is required to tear or break an inch-wide area of the sheet. This test is made in research and control laboratories on machines built especially for this purpose.

Since sheets undergo considerable strain in being pulled taut on the bed, in use, and in laundering, it is important to have a high breaking strength. There is tension and strain in both warp and filling directions on a sheet, so both should be strong.

"Weight" is the weight of the sheeting fabric in ounces per square yard. Weight is an important factor in serviceability. It affects durability, comfort, and how well the bed stays made. If the sheet is too light-weight it will not wear well, but too heavy a sheet is hard to launder. See discussion, page 7.

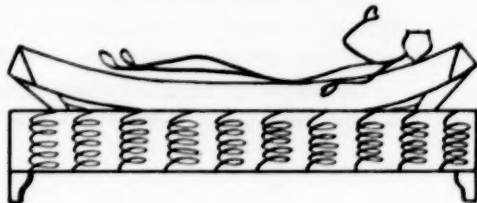
"Sizing" is the term for starch and other materials used to give the sheet a smoother finish. Sizing is removed in the first washing. A little sizing does no harm, but sometimes a great amount is used to cover up a poor fabric and make it look better than it really is. Too much sizing, when washed out, may leave the sheet feeling limp and appearing thin and porous.

The percentage of sizing is not often stated. But you can tell if the sheet has excessive sizing by grasping a corner of the sheet in each hand and rubbing the folds together. If a considerable quantity of white, powdery substance falls from it, it is probably over-sized.

"Shrinkage." Information about shrinkage is sometimes given on the label. Sometimes the maximum amount of shrinkage which will occur is stated, with a guarantee by the manufacturer that the amount will not be exceeded. Sometimes a label may say "pre-shrunk" with no indication of how much shrinkage may still occur, or it may say "fully pre-shrunk."

Flat sheets and sheeting sold by the yard are never pre-shrunk, so shrinkage will be considerable. It is not uncommon for a 108-inch sheet (torn, unhemmed size) to shrink 5 inches or more. This will mean only a 98-inch sheet after it is hemmed and laundered, and still less if it has an extra-wide hem at one end or wide hems at both ends. It's a good plan to buy sheets a little larger than you need to fit the bed; otherwise the sheets may be too short after they are washed.

Contour sheets, on the other hand, are always pre-shrunk. It is very important that contour sheets fit exactly right, so they are fully pre-shrunk to fit various standard-size mattresses before they are sold. A contour sheet that is too big will not stay in place well, and a too short contour sheet will make your bed (and you) look like this:



"First quality," "seconds," "irregulars," and "run-of-the-mill" refer to yarn quality and to weaving imperfections. A "first-quality" or "standard" sheet has even, good-quality yarns, and is practically free from weaving imperfections, with every filling yarn running unbroken from selvage to selvage.

"Seconds" and "irregulars" contain some weaving imperfections and imperfect yarns. Open out such sheets and locate the imperfections to see if they are of a kind or in places that will affect durability. The price for seconds and irregulars should be less than first-quality sheets.

Some manufacturers use their company brand name for first-quality sheets and sell seconds under another brand name, or unbranded.

"Run-of-the-mill" refers to sheets that are sold ungraded from the mill. They should be examined individually. Some may prove to be first-quality sheets, and thus good buys, while others may be too poor to class as seconds. The buyer takes the risk. These sheets should sell at a lower price than first-quality sheets.

"Denier" and "gauge" are terms used to describe knitted goods, and have the same meaning when applied to sheets as when applied to hosiery. "Denier" refers to the weight of the yarn used. The lower the denier, the lighter the weight.

"Gauge" refers to the number of needles per $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches on the knitting machine. In practical terms, this means the number of rows of loops per $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (crosswise) of the knitted fabric. The weight of a knitted sheet is determined by denier and gauge and will affect its serviceability as does the weight of woven sheets.

Are sheets standardized?

In the past 15 or 20 years, cotton sheets have been pretty well standardized to conform to five type classifications. The specifications are designed to serve as guides for purchasing sheets. If you find that one type best suits your particular needs, you will find it easier to select from that type again than to examine all the varieties offered on the market.

The specifications given for each class are the recommended *minimums* for that class. If a sheet exceeds the minimums for its class, it is a better sheet than the type indicates.

Manufacturers are not required to meet these standards for sheets, but many manufacturers meet or exceed the specifications listed for each type. Sheet labels often carry a statement of the type, as "Type 128," "Type 140," or "Original Percale" with no further explanation of specifications. When you see these statements, you may assume that the sheet fulfills the minimums for its class.

The following table summarizes the recommended minimum specifications for the five types of cotton sheets which are generally accepted as standard:

Table 1. Minimum Standards for Cotton Sheets

Types	Thread Count (per inch)	Weight (oz./sq. yd.)	Breaking Strength (pounds per inch)
Muslin:			
Type 112 (light weight)	60 x 52	3.7	40 either direction
Type 128 (medium weight)	70 x 60	4.2	55 " "
Type 140 (heavy)	74 x 66	4.6	70 " "
Percalé:			
Type 180 (fine count or utility)	86 x 82	3.7 to 4.0	60 " "
Type 200 (combed or original)	200 square	3.8 max.	60 " "

Many stores do not stock Type 112 muslin at all when times are good but sell it often during depression years because it is somewhat cheaper than other types. In war periods when there is a shortage of fibers or of workers for the mills, Type 112 sheets are sometimes produced because they can be turned out with less fiber and at somewhat greater speed.

Colored and decorative cotton sheets are not made in as many types as white sheets. They are commonly offered in Type 128 muslin or Type 180 percale, or in percale only.

What does this table mean to you?

A good quality muslin sheeting is strong, sturdy, and durable. It may be coarse or fine, depending on the type of sheet. Light-weight muslin is not as serviceable as the other types. Heavy muslin is recommended for hard wear, as in a family with growing boys, or for very active sleepers. Good quality heavy muslin has fine, even yarns, is smooth, and becomes softer and smoother with use and laundering.

An extremely light-weight sheet is not durable, wrinkles in use, and does not stay in place well on the bed. A heavy sheet is durable and stays in place on a properly-made bed, but is harder to handle in laundering. If laundry is sent out and paid for by the pound, the bill for laundering heavy muslin sheets will be higher than a bill for the same size and number of other weights in muslin or percale sheets.

"Percale" sheeting is assumed to be of longer fiber cotton than muslin, yarns are finer, even, and light in weight, and therefore nicer in appearance. Percale

sheets are softer and smoother than muslin sheets. They are also more expensive, ranging from only a part of a dollar more per sheet, to two or three times as much as muslin. Percale is a luxurious fabric and will not withstand vigorous laundering methods as well as heavy muslin.

Contour sheets are available in both muslin and percale.

What about standards for nylon sheets?

Nylon-cotton sheets are now being offered with the same specifications as Type 180 percale, and Types 140 and 128 are expected on the market soon.

One hundred per cent nylon sheets, although more expensive than cotton, are being promoted in both white and colors, and in woven and knitted construction. Claims made for them, in addition to beauty and luxury, are: they can be hand-washed at home, thus saving laundry bills; they dry faster than other kinds of sheets and need no ironing; they can be stored in less space than other sheets; they wear twice as long as cotton; and they are reversible. Nylon contour sheets for both top and bottom sheets are widely advertised.

However, both nylon and nylon-cotton sheets are still too new for anyone to have much information on their performance or satisfaction in actual use. If you are interested in trying nylon, you should consider: your facilities for laundering and drying (including enough room for the sheets to drip dry), the difficulty of keeping many of the new-fiber fabrics folded, and the possibility of accumulations of static electricity which may be uncomfortable.

Reaction is mixed toward a fitted woven-nylon contour sheet tried out at the College. Some people like the smooth, luxurious feel of the nylon. Others complain that they cannot keep pillows or covers on the bed when sleeping on the nylon sheet, and that they cannot sit up to read in bed because of its slipperiness. Some dislike the sheerness of nylon which allows the mattress pad to show through. No one complained about static electricity, but some find the sheet very hard to put on the mattress.

There are varying qualities of nylon sheets as there are of cotton. Although there are no standards as yet for nylon sheets, it is assumed that the same general data for sizes which fit specific bed sizes will apply as for cotton. At least one manufacturer recommends 30 denier—32 gauge for nylon tricot sheets.

What size sheets will fit your bed?

Mattresses have been pretty well standardized in size. Widths are for cot or studio couch, single or twin, three-quarter, and double-bed sizes. Lengths, except for part-size (children's) beds are 74 inches for the usual length mattress, and 80 inches for the "king-size" or extra-long mattress. Sheets are designed to fit standard mattress sizes.

The following table will guide you in choosing the correct sheet size:

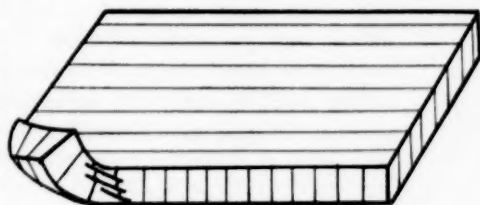
Table 2. Sheet Sizes to Fit Various Mattress Sizes

Type of Bed	Bed Width	Bed Length	Sheet Width	Sheet Length
Cot or studio couch	30"	74"	54"	99" or 108"
Single or twin	39"	74"	63" or 72"	99" or 108"
Three-quarter	48"	74"	72"	99" or 108"
Double	54"	74"	81" or 90"	99" or 108"
King-size	Same as any above	80"	Same as for bed width above	112" or more

Since foam rubber mattresses are thinner than other mattresses, you may satisfactorily use sheets of somewhat smaller dimensions. In any case, you will choose according to how much you want to "tuck under."

Be sure you purchase sheets that are large enough for your beds, both in width and in length. Remember to consider the thickness of your mattress, too. Sheets that are too small not only pull out around the edges when the bed is used, but make the sleeper uncomfortable. He must keep constantly tugging at the sheets to keep them in place or to keep himself covered, or he ignores the problem and sleeps directly on the mattress where the sheets have pulled out. In either case, this will mean completely remaking the bed each morning. Sheets wear out much faster with this kind of use.

Contour sheets *must* be purchased to fit your mattress exactly, regardless of whether they are made of cotton, nylon, or some other fiber. Contour sheets are made in special sizes to fit foam-rubber mattresses and are also available for king-size and for crib mattresses. At least one manufacturer makes a mattress with a special-built "tip-corner" (see sketch) to facilitate putting contour sheets on the mattress.



What details of finish should you look for?

Hems: Hems are usually 2 to 4 inches wide at the top of the sheet, and 1 to 1½ inches wide at the bottom. Some sheets have the same size hems at top and bottom—often 2 inches wide.

The hem should be evenly turned, firmly stitched, well finished at the ends, and should run on a straight line parallel to the filling yarns. Twelve to 14 machine stitches per inch are recommended. This is a fairly small stitch. Stitching should look the same on both sides of the hem.

The ends of the hem may be finished by a stitching which continues from the hem up along the selvage edge to the top where it may be fastened or back-stitched to the hem stitching, or blanket-stitched to close the hem fold. All are satisfactory if correctly done.

Hemstitched hems are decorative, but the hemstitching often wears out before the sheet. Examine hemstitched hems, and applied hems of different color, design, or fabric to see that they are cut straight on the grain of the material and are applied to the sheet in a straight line parallel to the filling yarns.

Color: Be sure that colored sheets, color-trimmed sheets, or printed or color-woven patterns are guaranteed to be absolutely color-fast to laundering. Otherwise your sheets may soon look dingy and ugly, and you may want to discard them long before they are worn out. If you plan to use sheets for curtains, draperies, bedspreads, and such uses, they will need to be light-fast also.

Selvages: Selvages are the heavy $\frac{3}{4}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-wide edges along the sides of the sheet. Extra yarns are added in weaving to make the edges stronger. Selvages should be smooth, flat, even, and firmly woven, with no ragged, loose, or broken places. They must be strong and wide enough to hold the other yarns securely. Avoid buying sheets with curled selvages. A selvege that curls probably was not woven with even tension throughout, or it may not have been woven at the same tension as the body of the sheet. In either case, it may not give satisfactory service. Sheets may have specially-woven tape selvages which are flat and durable. Some manufacturers add extra reinforcing yarns in the body of the sheet near the selvege to give added support to the side of the sheet and prevent some of the strains which otherwise occur on the selvege.

You may find it worthwhile to keep a record of the kinds of sheets you buy and the dates you purchased them. It is easy to print the purchase date on the inside of the hem with permanent indelible ink.

The record, together with the experience you gain in use of the sheets, will help you in buying sheets another time.



What about pillowcases?

The same factors apply when you choose pillowcases as when you choose sheets. Pillowcases should measure two inches larger in circumference (distance around) than the pillows they are to fit, and should be six inches longer, hemmed. This shows how to measure the circumference of a pillow.

Pillowcases are usually made from

sheeting woven in tubular form rather than flat, thus requiring no side seams. Pillow tubing is available in several widths. You will need to check the size of your own pillows, then choose pillowcases according to those measurements, to insure proper fit. A pillowcase that is too large does not look neat on the bed, and allows the pillow to slide around inside when the sleeper moves about. Pillowcases that are too small are more difficult to put on the pillows, and may make the pillow wrinkle or double-up in spots. A pillowcase that is too small makes the pillow seem firmer and fatter than it is without the case.

PART II. CARE OF SHEETS AND PILLOWCASES

The life of a sheet depends as much on the care it receives as on the correct choice in the first place. Some of the important factors that affect wear are: how you make and unmake your beds, how the sheets are laundered, when they are repaired, and how they are used.

What care should be taken in making and unmaking your beds?

Bedding should be loosened all around from under the mattress before it is taken off the bed. *Never* yank sheets to loosen them from under the mattress nor to loosen them from several layers of other bedding which you have taken off together. Sheets may tear with such treatment while they are still quite serviceable.

As you remove sheets from the bed, watch for any needed repairs and make them before the sheets are washed.

Check bedsprings occasionally to see that there are no rough edges and no spring-ends protruding where they may catch and tear the sheets as they are tucked under or removed. If you find places that need repair, fix them immediately. Carpentry may be necessary. Often rough edges may be covered with tape or wound with strips of cloth. Ends of springs not enclosed in fabric may be bent down and away from the spring surface with pliers. Several layers of cloth or heavy paper may be placed over worn spots in the springs, between springs and mattress. Parts of old mattress-pads, mattress-covers, or old quilts make good pads between springs and mattress.

Use mattress-pads on your beds to protect the mattress and also to protect your sheets from abrasion against the mattress. For maximum protection, the pad should cover the entire top surface of the mattress.

If you have sheets and beds of more than one size, be careful not to interchange the sheets. Bed-making will be easier if sheets of different sizes can be easily identified in their place of storage. Storing different sizes in different piles helps. Some people find it helpful to use cotton tapes of different colors

to distinguish sizes. A small piece of the tape is sewed to the inside on the corner of the bottom hem. A glance at the color identifies the size.

The bottom sheet will be neater and stay in place better if the corners are mitered as they are on a hospital bed. Sheets 99 inches long are too short to tuck in at both ends of a standard size mattress. They may be brought up even with the top edge of the mattress at the head of the bed, then tucked in well and mitered at the foot of the bed. The lower sheet is pulled up tight at the head of the bed, and pillows hold the top edge of the sheet in place. Sheets 108 inches long can be tucked in at both ends of a standard-size mattress. All four corners may be mitered, if desired.

The top sheet should tuck in at the foot of the mattress and turn back 10 to 18 inches at the head over the other bedding. This protects the other bedding and prevents tugging at the hem of the sheet. Some people like the foot-end of their top sheet mitered too, but other people prefer it only partially mitered. This means that the last step in mitering a corner—tucking sheet in at the sides of the mattress—is omitted. Your feet can be comfortable and the corners at the foot of the bed don't need to be remade each morning.

Change your beds frequently—at least one clean sheet a week—so that sheets do not become too soiled before they are laundered. In very warm, humid weather, a frequent fresh change of sheets adds greatly to your sleeping comfort. Change sheets often when someone in the family is sick in bed. Teach children to form the habit of going to bed clean. Remove your own makeup before you go to bed. This will help to prevent stains that require severe methods for removal.

Since most wear comes under the shoulders of the sleeper, regularly reverse your sheets (put the top hem at the foot of the bed and the bottom hem at the top of the bed) to insure longer, more even wear. If your sheets have the same size hems at both ends, you will not be concerned with this problem as reversal occurs anyway by chance. Sheets should be used half of their life with the top hem at the head of the bed, and half of the time with the bottom hem at the top of the bed, for maximum durability. It may be convenient to use the wide hem at the head for half the year, then use the narrow hems at the head for the rest of the year. Or you may work out a system of shorter or longer periods of time that is more convenient for you. Reversing each time the bed is changed is often recommended, but it may be hard to keep track of which sheets were used which direction, especially if sheets are rotated in use or if more than one person makes the beds.

What care must you take in laundering?

White sheets are more likely to remain white if they are washed with white clothes only, and if neither clothes nor sheets are badly soiled.

Any stains or spots not likely to come out in washing should be removed

before washing, as soap and hot water may set them permanently. Removal treatment should be limited to the affected spot.

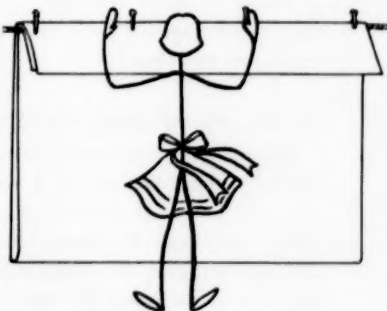
Use plenty of soap or synthetic detergent to wash your sheets, and rinse thoroughly. Several rinses may be necessary. Thorough rinsing helps to keep sheets clean and bright. Hard water will do a better cleaning job if a softener is added, whether you use soap or a synthetic detergent. Add the softener before the soap or detergent, as considerably less of the soap, especially, may be needed.

Sunshine is the safest bleach. Strong bleaches damage cottons, causing them to weaken and wear out sooner than usual. If you need a bleach occasionally, use *no more* than the amount recommended on the bottle or package. Add it to the soapy water rather than in a soak period with water only, before the wash. Bleach is less likely to damage cottons if used with a soapy solution.

If you dry your sheets out-of-doors, hang them where they will not flap in the wind. Strong winds may whip out the corners of hems or break the selvage yarns.

Hang your sheets in different positions on the line occasionally. Pin frequently enough to avoid strain on small areas. A recommended method is to fold the sheet with the two hems together and place over the line hem-sides up, lapping the hems over the line about 12 inches.

This way: →



You may prefer your sheets unironed, and unironed sheets do wear longer. If you iron yours, be careful to use the proper temperature.

Even the mildest scorch greatly weakens cotton. Although we have often been advised not to iron creases in sheets as they supposedly wear out along the folds, this probably is not important. Sheets usually wear out first in some place other than the folds anyway.

Work out a folding system that suits your own storage space. You will save time and work if sheets are stored in such a way that you can identify different sizes, etc., without having to open out the sheet. A label taped to the shelf edge does the trick nicely if you keep sheets sorted in piles of the same size.

Be sure your sheets are thoroughly dry before you put them away. Otherwise, they may mildew if stored in a warm, dark place. Mildew weakens sheets, and often the stains can never be completely removed.

Get in the habit of placing newly-laundered sheets at the bottom of the pile when you store them. This will allow for automatic rotation in use. Sheets wear longer if rotated!

How should nylon sheets be laundered?

Nylon sheets may be washed in a machine or by hand. Researchers say that soap washes nylon cleaner and keeps it brighter than synthetic detergents do. A good sudsy washing followed by thorough rinsing is as essential for nylon as it is for cotton.

Chlorine bleach is not usually recommended for nylon; peroxide or sodium perborate is better. There are some new dry, granular bleaches but they have not been widely enough used for much information to be available.

Nylon sheets must be hung up where they can drip dry. They should not be dried in a dryer because of the possibility of setting permanent wrinkles in them.

Ironing is not advisable, as nylon is sensitive to heat and will begin to soften at a fairly low temperature. One of the selling points for nylon is that it needs no ironing.

Sheets of other synthetic fibers and of the new fibers blended with cotton may require special handling. But it is assumed they may be cared for in the same way as nylon.

When should sheets be repaired?

Inspect your sheets occasionally for needed repairs by holding them up, unfolded, toward the light. A sheet is beyond repair if you can see many little splits or holes. If you can see thin places, repair them. Small thin places or small holes may be darned by hand or by back-and-forth machine stitching. Machine darning, like hand darning, should run not only across the worn spot but also in the other direction. A patch from a good area in another old sheet may be used to patch worn areas too large for darning.

A tear should be repaired at once; otherwise it will get worse in use or washing. You may need to back a three-cornered tear with a patch or paper while you stitch. If the edges of the tear are jagged, patching will be more satisfactory than darning.

As hemstitching wears out, and the hem tears free from the body of the sheet, you can make attractive repairs with rickrack. Cut the hemstitching down the center. This will leave a picot edge on the sheet and on the hem. Sew the rickrack points neatly along the edge of the sheet, just back of the picot edge. Do the same on the hem side, and your sheet will again be serviceable. This can be done easily with your sewing machine. Examine sheets to be sure they are worth it before you undertake this job.

Worn sheets may still have serviceable areas that can be used in other ways. If the good area is large enough, the old sheet may be cut down to fit a child's bed or crib, or for under-slips for your pillows. Under-slips protect the pillows

and make the outer pillowcases appear whiter. You can find many uses for soft, old sheets, from bandages to cleaning cloths for the family car.

And pillowcases?

The same general care is required for pillowcases as for sheets, with this added caution: never use your pillowcases as laundry bags. They may be damaged by the severe strain put on them in such use. Also, they may be placed in damp or not-too-clean areas and pick up soil or stains that cannot be removed by ordinary washing methods.

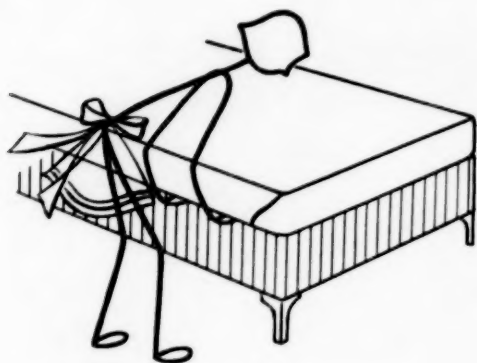
Women wear out pillowcases faster than men do because of the abrasive effect of bobby pins and metal curlers. If you wish to protect your pillowcases, cover your curlers with a turban or scarf when you go to bed.

Hair oil and other dressings, cosmetics, and creams are somewhat difficult to remove from pillowcases. Be sure to shampoo frequently, and remove your makeup before going to bed.

And pillow fights are hard on pillowcases too!

REFERENCE:

Guides for Buying: Sheets, Blankets, Bath Towels. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Farmers' Bulletin 1765. December 1936.



JULY 1955

A publication of the
New York State College of Home Economics,
a unit of the State University of New York,
at Cornell University

TO FOLD A CONTOUR SHEET

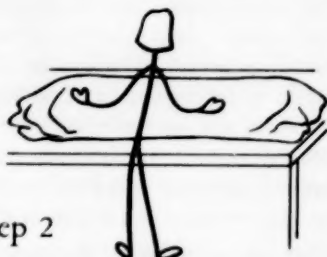
Contour sheets require special care in folding for storage. You will need a fairly large flat work surface. If you wish to iron contour sheets, do so after Step 3, 4, or 5.

Step 1



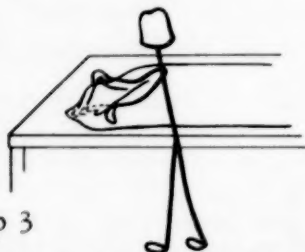
Fold the sheet in half lengthwise by bringing the selvage edges together up to, but not including, the corners.

Step 2



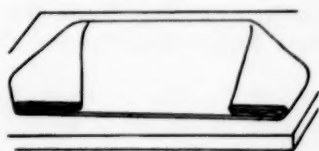
Place the sheet on a flat table or bed surface with the selvage edges toward you.

Step 3



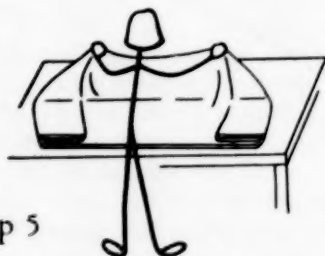
With left hand, pick up extreme left end of sheet and with right hand push top corner pocket down into bottom corner pocket. Bring end held in left hand down to the selvage edges.

Step 4



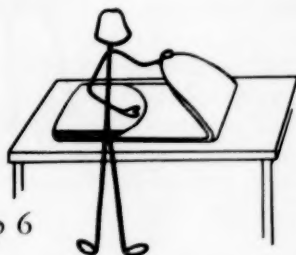
If the sheet is contoured at all four corners, repeat Step 3 at the other end. The sheet will then look like this.

Step 5



Fold the sheet in half by bringing the center over to the selvage edges.

Step 6



Fold both ends to the middle, then fold in half again. You may fold as many more times as you wish.